



## Riffing on a theme: Faculty involvement in a theme-based service-learning network

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### Summary

This research paper examines an example of faculty growth and learning. It focuses on the results of a case study that sought to explore the experiences of faculty who are part of a “Food Security Research Network” at a university in Northern Ontario, Canada.

This qualitative case study was framed through an appreciative inquiry social constructionist approach. The data were drawn from interviews with 18 faculty members, reports submitted by the network, and personal observation of a selection of network-related events. The research questions explored what attracts these faculty members to incorporate into their courses a themed approach to service-learning (i.e., focused on food security) and seeks to better understand the impact that service-learning has on the faculty members themselves.

In addition to outlining the model on which this network operates, this session will highlight two of the major themes from the study, namely localism and faculty learning and growth. Through the theme of localism it became apparent that faculty interest in the topic of food security, and their commitment to the sustainability of local food production, became not only an attraction to service-learning but also a means to engage in research and teaching on matters of personal and professional importance to these faculty. The study also revealed how involvement with service-learning created opportunities for faculty to learn about implementing a counter-normative pedagogy and gain new insights into their discipline and themselves. The paper will relate these findings to the extant literature on service-learning as well as highlight how this study offers new insights on both faculty work and faculty engagement in service-learning.

This study presents a unique perspective on faculty engagement in service-learning, in that the service-learning courses are all organized around a theme of food security.

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